

I wish I could have met him ...

Commentary by Bob Vander Plaats

The following was published as a guest column in the [Des Moines Register](#).

When I was a young boy growing up in Sheldon, Iowa, there were only three television stations our black and white Sylvania could receive. Typically, two of the stations were fuzzy and, in order to be viewed, the antennas needed constant adjusting, holding, or wrapping in aluminum foil. And when Billy Graham was scheduled to deliver a message at one of his evangelistic crusades, my Mom and Dad would go through all painstaking measures necessary to ensure its reception in our living room. They joined parents across the United States ushering in Billy Graham's sermon and the timeless gospel message to their children.

I wish I could have met him. Like millions of others around the globe, my life was immeasurably impacted by Graham and his teaching. Even watching him in black and white, I felt like I knew him. And I liked him.

He modeled a love for his Lord, for his family, for his country, and for the world with a contagious hope and an unspeakable joy. And his hope and joy were found solely in his child-like faith in his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

"Billy Graham's impact was limitless because the voice he represented is timeless."

Yes, he was a good speaker and a winsome leader. But what made Billy Graham truly remarkable is he believed what he was preaching and he lived a life that modeled his teaching. Simply put, he believed and meant every word of God's Word and the lessons he delivered in his sermons. He was a depiction of

authenticity, and it was his authenticity, powered by the Holy Spirit, that gave life to a ministry with unprecedented impact.

His authenticity also made Graham a leader of leaders. Regardless of the audience, his message never wavered. He spoke with clarity and with great assurance to presidents, prime ministers, kings, media, and all those in authority – and always with the same message. He wasn't looking for a seat at the table of power; he was inviting the powerful to recognize their weakness without the one true hope ... the King of Kings, Jesus Christ.

Graham was quoted saying, "My one purpose in life is to help people find a personal relationship with God, which, I believe, comes through knowing Christ."

It was this life purpose and Graham's sold-out focus that led him, inspired him, and allowed him to persevere. He turned down the glitter of Hollywood and the promise of power because his vision was much, much bigger.

Billy Graham led with humility, with integrity, with great love for his God and for his neighbor. Billy Graham's impact was limitless because the voice he represented is timeless.

We could really use a leader like Billy Graham today – a leader who would be a role model for our children, for our communities, for our nation, and for the world.

I have talked to many who share my wish to have met the man called "America's Pastor." And for all of us wishers, there's still hope.

As Graham once said, "Someday you'll hear Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God."

One day, you and I and all those who would have liked to have met Billy Graham can have that same address. All we have to do is embrace the gospel message Graham so faithfully taught and lived: "Whoever believes in the Son (Jesus Christ) has eternal life" (John 3:36).

Wow ... what a legacy!

Bob Vander Plaats is president and CEO of The FAMiLY LEADER.